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outposts

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CHARLES CAUSLEY

Child's Song

CHRISTOPHER Beer
Used to live here,
Where the white water
Winds over the weir,
Close to the claw
Of the pawing sea,
Under the spear
Of a cypress tree.

Never a nightingale
Rings on the bough,
Burned is the orchard
And broken the plough.
Out of the orient
Light like a lash
Severed the sky
And the river ran ash.

Over the valley
Dawdled the fire
Swallowing city
Steeple and spire,
All the proud people
Nowhere to hide
Kindling flowers
Of flame as they died.

Nobody passes
Nor sheds a salt tear,
No-one wears mourning
For Christopher Beer:
Free as Aurora,
Green as a gun,
Rich as the rainbow
And blind as the sun.

GEORGE MACBETH

A Tercentenary

THREE hundred years ago
Tonight John Cleveland died,
Having outlived his fame.
He was a bitter man.
I speculate that no
Moderate man would have tried
To resurrect his name,
Nor any fanatic can,

Mouthing his broken verse.
I was compared to him
As a poet once. I take
It still as a compliment
If intensity and terse
Couplets where feelings brim
Like Hell's pitch-boiling lake
Were what the critic meant.

I doubt greatly they were.
He would have meant conceits,
Old commonplace ideas
Wrapped up in elaborate words
Like street-walkers in fur.
Well, Cleveland isn't Keats
With his palate and his tears
Cocking an ear for birds

On a bench in a park
And nor am I, thank God.
Cleveland was at war
In his poems and his life,
A man who made his mark
By cultivating an odd
Quirky rudeness for
A tool of civil strife

But unlike some brave men
Was loyal to his King
Even after the end;
Against the invading Scots
Fought with both wig and pen;
Nor did that abject thing
Truckle and commend
While still practising plots.

Cleveland, creature of faction,
Royalist from choice,
Anglican, pamphleteer
On the side of divine right,
Satirist, man of action,
I choose your original voice
In an age of doubt and fear
To celebrate tonight.

CHRISTOPHER LEVENSON

The Idiot

HIS buzzing lips proclaim a permanent siege
Of the walled city. Innocent wonder has sealed
His mind from all but pain, its only knowledge.
Fortressed in fear, such ignorance will not yield.
His blank gaze warns us we can build no bridge
By which our two worlds might be reconciled.

Like doctors gathered around an oxygen tent
We watch the disease's ebb and flow. Now it breaks free
The tongue splutters towards meaning; now it is thick,
pent
In its re-echoing caverns. Nowhere is room for pity,
And nothing further to do, however kindly meant,
But cede to death his pointless victory.

West Germany.

JOHN BARRON MAYS

A later Spring

THE cuckoo bells the lonely hour
This later spring. Had I the power
No longer would we wander here
Beside the evening-haunted mere
Where one grey-surpliced heron stands,
Sad savant of the mournful sands,
Searching with cold sagacious eye
The troubled pool of memory.

The past is round us as we go
And the dead seem more close tonight,
And we who lost more than the years
Can bring again or spring can know
Feel the old wounds still raw and tears
Trembling behind the hawthorn blow.

ALEXANDER HENDERSON

A Portrait

NAKED, you seemed the pattern of a gown,
the sketch a dress designer makes before
the cutting, pinning, sewing ; outline plan
for this year's shape most elegantly drawn ;
waiting for sempstresses to give it form,
waiting for wearers otherwise than you.

The times you briefly took a third dimension,
became a model for at least one show,
seemed always strange, and gladly you returned
to two, preferring possibilities,
the charm of your potential, crayon style,
still safely one stage distant from the real.

Did pride command you never to endure
the cutting shears you often tried to want?
What impulse was it drove you to refuse
the shapes they offered, variously true?
Was night a game and day too insecure?
Too far the leap from dream to living shape?

You would not say what stuffs should fill the lines
precisely sketched for you, again, again,
what ninon, faille, organza or brocade,
what hush-hush of taffeta for your face,
what silk or satin lustre for your eyes,
or crease-resisting velvet for your heart.

Italy.

ELIZABETH JENNINGS

Moses

I PRESSED my lips against the stone and felt
The water come. Beneath my feet the dust
Blew in small breezes. So much further off
And higher than I ever could have scaled
The calm and sudden mountain stood. What goats,
I wondered, scrambled there, what birds
Made their flight circular because it stood,
This hope of climbers dazed by distances?

Faces that look at terror are transformed,
Not terror stays but awkward gentleness,
Man back to child replacing an old mirror,
The climbing dreams and hunger for the fact.

Stumbling beneath the burden that he carried
The prophet came, feet bleeding, fingers torn,
His face as if the sun had risen there.

ROY McFADDEN

Poem for John Boyd

THE streets are strewn with footprints. There
Yeats walked beneath instructing trees.
Joyce raised his ashplant to confer
A footnote on those sunsprayed quays.
In that dim corner Synge would stare
At naked wall for half-an-hour.

Harsh leaves, the rattling footsteps blow
Across the windy town, and dead
Voices rise in a wave and throw
Salty words on heedless head,
Claiming, declaiming there is no
City outside the dream they knew:

That Ireland is a name they bred
In poem or in hounded play,
That outside exiled words they said
Nothing exists above the clay
Except an idiot's bobbing head
Controlled by hands involved with blood.

That all that you or I can do
Is to perpetuate the dream,
Using each footprint to pursue
Those dreamers past the noisy stream
Of printless footprints stumbling through
Each stony undreamed avenue.

What I wrote in Stephen's Green
As a sad-mouthed boy in a lonely place,
Deaths ago and births between,
Has swung into truth again, found grace,
As the spire's unsleeping cock is seen
Interpreting the storm alone.

Northern Ireland.

EWART MILNE

Through the Bells

("But still we go from here alone
Say all the bells about the Throne."

John Betjeman)

WHEREVER the air's sharp and the light's growing,
John,
My voice will be heard through the bells.
In whatever dark age some man will be listening,
The man in the next street will be listening,
And the man beyond the suburbs' last street.

How can any 'we' be alone, John?
An 'I' can be alone, a 'you' can be alone,
But 'we' cannot be alone, or go from here alone.
When I am dying the man in the next street will be dying,
And the man beyond the suburbs' last street.

Dying is going from one room to another room:
From the room of life to the room of death.
Are not both communal? Does not the world circumscribe
them?
When I am dead the earth will be flowering
With the dead, a trillion trillion flowers flowering.

Deafened by the bells men go from here alone.
Not willing in life to share life's common room
Death without mercy breaks their solitude down.
Come! Let my heretic ask of your Churchman
Shall our aloneness hide from the Eyes of the Throne?

MARGARET STANLEY-WRENCH

Estuary

WITH the evening's tide, in flocks the boats come home,
Doves to harbour, rooks to roost, some resting
A bird's breast on the water, and stroking with web-foot
Oars that ravel and plait the dwindling tide.
Others like butterfiies idle up the current.
This one a cabbage white, wings veined with brown,
Or tabby as a tortoiseshell, or red and sable
Like the little hot skippers sliding across the sun-dried
Meadow grass that glistens with a breast of silk.

Up from the quays and landings, shelled like snails,
Men stagger under their burdens, carry home their coracles.
Boys drag up boats whose varnished ribs curl up
Yellow as smoke-dried haddocks. Others tether dinghies
As if hitching horses. Their curved bows, cello brown
Nudge and nestle as pastured beasts rub withers.
The hawk wings of the dark advance, advance.
And on the faces that turn towards the night
Lingers the glitter of the water, the shadow of light.

LESLIE NORRIS

Prologue for a Prophet

INSIDE the trembling of a day
Easily measured from sun to sun
A life is done or undone
And something given or taken away.

I am not a young man. I have seen
The systematic planets split
And fall. Under the lid of the eye
Enormous deserts lie.

The year is made of many days
But dies at last as a day dies;
And the strange arrangement ends
Of enemies and friends.

Inside the trembling of a day
Easily measured from sun to sun
A life is done or undone.
A hand can hide a hill.

FRANCIS BERRY

An Invisible Line

SOMEWHERE one crosses an invisible line
When moving about England, somewhere where
Fosse Way and Watling Street intersect
Inside the draughty Midlands: not that the line
Is parallel with the latitudes, for it moves, sometimes seeming
To march with the Jurassic Escarpment, sometimes with
The boundary of the Danelaw: you cannot tell
Exactly where it is, but motoring you say "Over,
We've left the South," or "Left the North"—and it's done
With something temporarily or permanently gone.

Somewhere one crosses an invisible line, and while
Stamford and Warwick stonily remain
To gleam or glower, one will also cross
One other line that is both certain and uncertain
(Whether one is aware of what one has done,
Or not, or even aware of what has gone).

Let few wish to hurry!

DONALD THOMAS

Innocence and Experience

THE first sensation for the child is all,
Supplies his vacuum with a galaxy:
Laps him in impact, floods the nerves with sense
To order stars by this astronomy.

The first impression clips into its shape
The rigid outline of a first-hand fact.
To strike a pattern is to recognize
A law established by this central act.

Superimposed by fresh patterns of sense,
Split-second universes follow on.
Contracting ripples shiver as they meet
The first thought's centre, its taut structure gone

Each cosmic contradiction overlaps
Outstripping thought to head-on impact runs.
Stars lock and split, new galaxies draw on
The hot collision of their central suns.

KENNETH GEE

Cape Cornwall

THIS land of earth and stone
water and wind continually bleach,
does not encourage lasting footprints:
tracks are evasive here, though you may reach

a lump of granite round
the corner of the day behind the sea,
look down the way you came and see the flood
cover the foot-learned contours of the valley.

Gulls climb like arrows high
up the dark wall that's not what you suppose,
the cliff, but the Atlantic hanging from the sky
too sheer for boats and desperately close.

The way back disappears
in what's unrecognised of root and rock—
not what you spent your sense and senses on:
is this the stone on which you meant to knock?

There is no safety left:
the animal risk of living makes your tread
wary: footholds you fumble for and keep
are only just, between the quick and dead.

GUIDA SWAN

The Young Sinner

IF her God were Graham Greene's,
to bargain with no credit terms,
nor discount off for former years
of virtuous behaviour,
what would she barter, life or faith,
who has not doubt enough to fear
that happiness when petals blow
in Spring, makes bitter fruit by fall,
who never wonders that the world was made
by Whom, but finds it good, and calls it, home?
Such careless life, such childish faith
are surely not worth bargaining for?
She might run free and never know
How near to doom her footprints go.

MAUREEN DUFFY

Girls Learning

A LICK of paint rims their scrubbed sullen mouths,
Girls pout in mirrors, gossip,
Hum blue notes, their selves laid by
Go meek to morning worship.
Last night they trembled when the rough boys' cry
Strummed their taught nerve strings in the park,
And kissed their hard mouths in the hugging dark.

They turn the page hearing of Juliet
She and her bright boy who lost.
Their thoughts fly up, brush the pane
Opaque with dust; chalk motes tossed
In a thin shaft of sun silt the dull brain.
Only the golden hero
Pictured in the desk, burns with a sullen glow.

Warm Spring winds sighing lay their bodies wide
Tranced in the pale sun they lounge,
Hearing the younger children
Chanting as they skip. They scrounge
A morsel of rich scandal, awaken
With the bell that bears them back
To the dull wisdom of the printed book.

Unsure, eager, they go to meet their boys,
Flash, sauntering careless, sparring
Loud to hide uncertainty.
Quick to outbid in daring,
Scared of the tides that flush them through, they try
To kiss half questions in their dark—
Learning each other, or themselves, there in the park.

PETER L. SISSONS

Remonstrance

(for David Henry)

HAD we not selected
the perpendicular route
to heaven, but elected

instead to spread the root
sideways, into the living
subway, and so salute

the commerce now writhing
at the guts and mad form
of the horizontal, giving

to our age its chloroform
of enterprise and despair,
we would I suppose conform

to the plague, and dare
to perform obsequious rites
celebrating aloud the care

we cannot care, the nights
of sleeping without rest,
and the constant lights

piercing our dreaming quest
of burning midnight ash
with wakefulness, when the rest

sleep, and the lonely rash
thoughts of youth twist
against the wall and dash
themselves into an angry mist.

BERNICE AMES

Painter at Work

WHERE does the willowy girl end
and the canvas before her begin?

From the landscape of her mouth
that cradles the sun
a power flows along her arms
into her brush;
from the hope in her eyes
vision races the wind
wonder pulls at her cheek hollows.

Under the shadow of discipline
translation extends her.
Has she lost all color
to the windy field of canvas
or merely freed herself from a bright truth?

The girl and the canvas
wear light on their separate textures.
To divide one from the other
would ignore that touch of infinite grace
breathing through both of them.

U.S.A.

RAYMOND WILSON

Genesis

HUNCHED in his ignorance, after dead of night
He came where neither serpent's sapience nor
(All prohibitions secretly invite)
God's threat could lure, bartering his blind world for
Known sensualities of light.

Crouched at the tree's swart root, what could restrain
The intuition of the sense that leapt
To know its apotheosis in brain?—
Or now relax the instructed sense that kept
The brute brow clenched upon its pain?

The fruit fell from the ape-hand and lay still.
Appalled flesh, knowing its dead weight of bone,
Shrank huddled in its walled horizons, till
The intellect stood up and walked straight on
To chart cosmographies of ill.

GEORGE HARTLEY

Fragment from a Dream

"*JUST where I would have kissed your cheek a fly*
In sweet basil." Said in a dream and so,
Beautiful and true. There on the left cheek
The gob of jelly with the fly immersed:
Obvious symbol of something-or-other,
Appearing like magic before a kiss
Could fall: guilty love this fly in amber?

But how continue where the dream left off;
To see myself from a great distance
Weak with fate, as she, but drunk and swearing?
Or in the same dream muttering as before,
Those words of love seen clearly through the haze
And now fossilized by the weight of days?

LARRY RUBIN

Noblesse Oblige

THE chess king is a lonely man: only
One other king alive on all the board,
Yet each must keep a careful square away,
Prudishly fearful of propinquity.
When unassailed by enemies, the king
Must keep himself in check.

The reckless pawns riot and wrestle—nothing
Seems to restrain their conviviality;
With muscles bared to match their yeoman strength,
They scramble for position; the game they play
Is tackle, not touch.

Even suave knights and well-bred bishops risk
The body-contact sports; they can pummel
With social approval, free of the royal dread
Of violating custom.

True, castles and queens are circumspect on all
Excursions among strangers; yet, if guarded,
They too may fraternize.

Only the monarch walks the friendless way,
His fellow sovereign never to embrace
In easy comradeship—
Somehow sensing final chessboard truth:
For king to close with king means instant death.

U.S.A.

REVIEWS

The Man Who Told His Love: Christopher Logue (Scorpion Press, 8s. 6d.).
Poem and Songs: Bernard Kops (Scorpion Press, 8s. 6d.).
Passage after Midnight: William Pillin (Inferno Press, $1).

WHEN Logue is good, he's very very good, and when he's bad, he's not so bad that the good becomes obliterated. That was the preconception which I brought to my reading of these 'adaptations' of Pablo Neruda's *Los Cantos d'Amores.* It was a preconception gained from his earlier collection, *Devil, Maggot and Son;* it was a preconception taken from his odd tendency to interpose, in a stream of doubtful romanticism, a line or two of colloquial truth. Thus in a poem which begins "Verily I am / every inch a dumb stone" and continues in a similar vein, he is able, eleven lines later, to conclude with : "Read me never for a truth. / Inside of me I am / simply as far as we have come". But that was written in 1953, and we are concerned here with a collection published at the end of 1958 !

The discipline of 'adaptation'—the word is Logue's and is used in preference to translation—has been a good one, and the twenty poems are more of a piece than we may have expected. Nevertheless, there is still a tendency at the end to remember lines here and there which are good rather than poems which are compelling. Almost every poem contains a few such lines, and it is a tribute to the collection as a whole that, when one comes to quote, the difficulty is one of choosing rather than of searching. Certainly I shall not forget : "Your tongue is like a red bird / Dancing on ivory" nor "When you say no your tongue is like / A small red bitch barking in a box" nor "Your mouth is loose and wet and my mouth / Covers it like a rag, dryly". And certainly I shall try to forget : "Close your eyes wherein the slow night stirs" and "Your arms / Translucent stones wherein I lie."

But perhaps it is myself at fault. There are poems here which I would not be without : number 20, *Tonight I write sadly;* number 19, *Lithe girl, brown girl;* and this one :

"Sometimes it's like
You are dead
When you say nothing.—
Or you heard things
I say, and
Could not be bothered to reply.

And your eyes, sometimes,
Move outside of you,
Watching the two of us, yes,

As if
After you turned towards the wall
Somebody's kisses stopped your mouth."

This small collection of fourteen poems and eight songs by Bernard Kops raises a hoary problem : Can poetry be written specifically for music and still retain its depth as poetry? I would hate to have to answer the question categorically but, on the evidence of this collection, the answer is no. Judged by the standards of song-lyrics the songs, which are taken from *The Hamlet of Stepney Green* and *The Dream of Peter Mann,* are good, but judged as poetry they read far too much as a kind of lightweight Auden. Among the poems, the undertone of Auden, though still present, has been absorbed into a voice which is primarily Kops—and it is an attractive voice. The personal poems, in particular *Away Like Death My Mother Is* and *To a Dead Yemenite,* appeal in the way that poems of private grief are able to appeal when the imagery has been objectified and the grief made universal. But it is for his thumbnail sketch of bored youth in *The Sad Boys* that I will remember this collection :

"The sad boys sit around and croon
but never lose their frown;
no one comes and no one goes;
they watch the leaves twist down.

The sad boys of the afternoon
pull petals from the park,
and throw them at the dying sun
and stroll into the dark."

There is something in me which responds immediately to the plight of the Jew exiled in modern urban society. His awareness of and nostalgia for roots which are slowly withering away in an alien culture, which he is sad to see go and yet knows no way of retaining, is an awareness that I seem to know, despite the fact of having been born and bred in the same mess of masonry as my parents and grandparents. If you share this response, it is likely that you will enjoy William Pillin's book. If you do not, it is likely that the thirty pages of free verse—and there is little variation in rhythm offered—will be too much for your shoulders to bear. But, even so, perhaps the title-poem, with its roots in Wallace Stevens, will appeal.

EDWIN BROCK.

Vision and Rhetoric: G. S. Fraser (Faber, 25s.).
New Zealand Literature: E. H. McCormick (O.U.P., 22s. 6d.).

ALTHOUGH *Vision and Rhetoric* is described as a "comprehensive conspectus of the past half-century's achievement," it would hardly be fair to the author to review it on that basis; otherwise it would be necessary to point out what a great deal had been overlooked. Nor is there, as the title seems to imply, a consistent theme running through the book. It is, in fact—as Mr. Fraser makes clear in his Preface—a collection of essays on the work of some of the most important poets, written over a period of years for various journals and publications; and as such it is an admirable and interesting volume. The changes in tone and manner from one poem to the next are very noticeable, but these shifts of emphasis and modes of approach serve to add a pleasing variety to the collection as a whole.

In the opening and closing essays (written most recently, perhaps specifically for this volume) a distinction is made between Vision and Rhetoric (here regarded as "the common teachable element in poetry"), and Mr. Fraser discusses the fashionable rejection of the romantic tradition in favour of "rational control" in the composition of poetry. In view of the critical stand he has taken during the last few years and the encouragement he has given to "The Movement" poets, it is surprising to learn that he finally comes down on the side of the Romantics. "My objection to this theory (i.e., of The Movement poets) . . . is both that in the end it does not wholly square with my personal experience of what writing a poem involves and that, if it does not produce so many bad poems as a romantic attitude does, it does not produce so many genuinely exciting poems either." After all that has been said and written on the subject, this is hardly a discovery.

When he is not looking uneasily over his shoulder to see if he is being watched, Mr. Fraser is a sound and valuable critic. In the essays on the work of individual poets, he is more sure of himself, and has some extremely shrewd observations to make on such poets as Eliot, Auden, Spender, Graves and Dylan Thomas. He can beat the American "New Critics" at their own game largely because he has an abundant reserve of common sense as well as a clarity of perception which goes right to the heart of the matter. But his two essays on W. B. Yeats are undoubtedly the most outstanding.

If requested to list all the New Zealand writers they knew, few English readers would be able to name more than a dozen, and

most of them would be compelled to exercise their memories after mentioning Katherine Mansfield, Allen Curnow, Frank Sargeson and perhaps one or two poets and novelists whose work has been published recently in this country. To such readers Mr. E. H. McCormick's survey of New Zealand literature will prove an excellent and much-needed introduction. Mr. McCormick begins with a brief description of the land and society prior to the arrival of the colonists, discusses the problems of the emigrants in relation to the earliest attempts at writing, and traces the development of New Zealand literature down to the books published in 1956 and 1957. In Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and South Africa, despite the peculiar characteristics of each country, the same broad phases can be discerned in the development of literary traditions—the nostalgic period, dominated by a sense of exile; the gradual recognition of the new country; the growth of a national outlook; and the emergence of an indigenous tradition capable of absorbing what is still imported. In any one country, of course, these phases may overlap and poets representing a later stage may be in advance of their contemporaries. Not until the fourth stage is reached is the colonial spirit finally thrown off. Mr. McCormick does not delve very deeply into individual works, or attempt much in the way of assessment, but it would have been impossible for him to do so in a study of this scope. As it is, he does manage to spotlight the most important writers and provides a very clear picture of the scene as a whole.

HOWARD SERGEANT.

The Ride from Hell: Herbert Palmer (Hart-Davis, 12s. 6d.).
Three Journeys: A. E. Dodd (Fortune, 7s. 6d.).
Here No Security: Alexander Buist (Shakespeare Head Press, 10s. 6d.).
The Silver Pathway: Beresford Richards (F. R. Macmillan, 15s.).

HERBERT PALMER'S new book of poems is undoubtedly the most competent and interesting of these four under review. In it he breaks a comparatively long silence and, at an age when most other poets have retired either to prose or to oblivion, he has demonstrated that his remarkable vigour of expression and authentic bardic manner are by no means superannuable. Those who have

admired Palmer as man and poet down the years will be glad to have this little volume as a reminder of former glories. Here is the same individual turn of phrase, the same lyric plangency and enthusiastic rush of utterance that has kept his name alive long after most of his contemporaries are mercifully forgotten. His poems still appear in all truly representative anthologies and there is at least one in this new volume that will surely survive as long as religious poetry has any place in succeeding centuries. *God's Desired* and its companion poem, *Desire for God,* are profoundly moving examples of the timelessness of all good writing. They are catholic in the best sense of that word.

It is certainly unfortunate that Mr. Palmer has printed his sonnet on *The Coronation of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II* on the first page of his book for it will surely prevent many contemporaries from turning over the rest of his pages. And that would be a great pity, for Mr. Palmer, despite his occasional moralistic style and moments of self-conscious prophesying, is worth close attention. If this book does no more than send us back to the fine poems of his earlier works—to *Ishmael,* the *Woodworker's Ballad, The Unknown Warrior Speaks, Ghost Garden* and the *Prayer for Rain,* we will have cause for gratitude; and perhaps some wise publisher may even yet be induced to offer us a new and comprehensive *Selected Poems* before it is too late.

Mr. Dodd's book is an attempt to write philosophical poetry relevant to our moral and social predicament to-day. Too often we are conscious of a sort of blurred background of prosiness which destroys the flow of lines and makes one wonder if, after all, verse is the correct medium for this sort of thing. Mr. Buist, by contrast, has a surer grasp of purely lyrical forms and his poems will give pleasure to a few who still enjoy the urbane union of sound and sense in traditional modes. He has also a true satiric touch as he shows in *The Snob* and in *Fireguard* :

> "Squadded together, still we sit
> Too selfish, old or dull to care,
> Each clinging to his tarnished bit
> Of privilege and *laissez-faire.*"

Those of us who have any memory of civil defence during the last war will recognise the truth of that gentle probe.

Mr. Richard's volume is a lengthy assembly of what is prob-

ably a life's writing. For those who enjoy the Patience Strong manner there will be much to appeal in these hundred and more essays in conventional sensitivity.

JOHN BARRON MAYS.

In Defence of the Earth: Kenneth Rexroth (Hutchinson, 15s.).
Homage to Mistress Bradstreet: John Berryman (Faber, 18s.).

FOR the work of a poet who has been writing for thirty years, and who has produced some very fine poems in that time, *In Defence of the Earth* is disconcertingly uneven. This may be due to the fact that the author, Mr. Kenneth Rexroth, has become "the central figure in the group of writers who are currently making American critics talk of renaissance in San Francisco" (better known to us as the Beat Generation), but there is no excuse for some of the slipshod writing in this volume. By all means let us have poems of protest, but surely the operative word for Mr. Rexroth should be "poems". Take these lines from *Thou Shalt Not Kill,* the long poem in memory of Dylan Thomas which, apparently, some critics believe to be a "moving and bitter elegy" :—

"I want to pour gasoline down your chimneys.
I want to blow up your galleries.
I want to burn down your editorial offices.
I want to slit the bellies of your frigid women.
I want to sink your sailboat and launches.
I want to strangle your children at their finger paintings.
I want to poison your Afghans and poodles. . . ."

There are many lines like this. We can understand Mr. Rexroth's feelings, but Dylan himself would have laughed at such an adolescent outburst. We have the right to expect something a little more mature from the author of *The Phoenix and the Turtle.*

Fortunately, there are many better poems than this; poems in which he expresses his attitude towards society a great deal more effectively; poems of tenderness, such as those addressed to his wife; philosophical poems which reflect an adult judgment (i.e., *Time is the Mercy of Eternity*); and the epigrams and translations :

"Naked out of the dark we came,
Naked into the dark we go,
Come to my arms, naked in the dark."

The title-poem of Mr. John Berryman's volume has been even more highly praised. "The most distinguished long poem by an American since *The Waste Land,*" said Edmund Wilson; "One of the finest poems ever written by an American," wrote Conrad Aiken; and now our own Mr. Alvarez has pronounced it "perhaps the most important long poem since the *Four Quartets.*" And perhaps not. It is difficult to believe that these are carefully considered critical judgments; for they do the poet great disservice. The truth is that the poem is extremely interesting and capable of arousing genuine respect, but even if it were completely successful at its own level (and it is far from that), it would still not be in the same class as, or comparable in any way to, either *The Waste Land* or *Four Quartets,* as Messrs. Wilson, Aiken and Alvarez must know. In this poem Mr. Berryman frequently ties himself in knots with his unnecessarily complicated syntax, and his subject itself calls out for more dramatic treatment than he has given it.

The early poems included in this volume express a human sympathy more directly than the later poems, particularly *Winter Landscape, The Traveller,* and *Letter to His Brother*:

"I wish for you—the moon was full, is gone—
Whatever bargain can be got
From the violent world our fathers bought,
For which we pay with fantasy at dawn,
Dismay at noon, fatigue, horror by night.
May love, or an image in work,
Bring you the brazen luck to sleep with dark,
And so to get responsible delight."

but Mr. Berryman is almost always competent in the shorter poems in which he manages to summarise a situation such as that of *The Ball Poem* and *The Nervous Songs.*

CHRISTOPHER MORGAN.

NOTICES

POEMS INVITED. Contributions are invited for a well-known national magazine for whom Howard Sergeant acts as Poetry Editor. Lyrical poems (having a direct impact upon the reader) and light and humorous poems should be sent, together with a stamped addressed envelope, to Howard Sergeant at the *Outposts* address. Generous payment. Length not more than 20 lines.

THE HEADLANDS, poems by Howard Sergeant (published by Putnam & Co. Ltd.) can be ordered through local booksellers or obtained from this address, price 7s. 6d. (8s. including postage). "Those who despair of the aims and values of modern poetry should ponder Mr. Sergeant and think again."—*Contemporary Review.*

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